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THE

SPEECH

OF THE HONOURABLE

CHARLES JAMES FOX.

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CHARLES JAMES FOX,

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON

Monday, the 3d of February, 1800,

ON A

MOTION FOR AN ADDRESS TO THE THRONE,

APPROVING OF THE REFUSAL OF MINISTERS
TO TREAT WITH THE FRENCH REPUBLIC.

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CHARLES JAMES FOX.

Monday, February 3, 1800.

Mr. Dundas moved the Address of Thanks to His Majesty. A Debate took place. Mr. Fox rose, after the Right Honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and spoke in substance as follows:

MR. SPEAKER,

AT ſo late an hour of the night, I am ſure you will do me the juſtice to believe that I do not mean to go at length into the diſcuſſion of this great queſtion. Exhauſted as the attention of the Houſe muſt be, and unaccuſtomed as I have been of late to attend in my place, nothing but a deep ſenſe of my duty could have induced me to trouble you at all, and particularly to requeſt your indulgence at ſuch an hour.

Sir, my honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erſkine) has truly ſaid, that the preſent is a new æra in the war. The right honourable gentleman oppoſite to me (Mr. Pitt) feels the juſtice of the remark; for by travelling back to the com-

mencement of the war, and referring again to all the topics and arguments which he has ſo often and ſo ſucceſsfully urged to the Houſe, and by which he has drawn them on to the ſupport of his meaſures, he is forced to acknowledge, that, at the end of a ſeven years conflict, we are come but to a new æra in the war, at which he thinks it neceſſary only to preſs all his former arguments to induce us to perſevere. All the topics which have ſo often miſled us—all the reaſoning which has ſo invariably failed—all the lofty predictions which have ſo conſtantly been falſified by events—all the hopes which have amuſed the ſanguine, and all the aſſurances of the diſtreſs and weakneſs of the enemy which have ſatisfied the unthinking, are again enumerated and advanced as arguments for our continuing the war. What! at the end of ſeven years of the moſt burthenſome and the moſt calamitous ſtruggle that ever this country was engaged in, are we again to be amuſed with notions of finance and calculations of the exhauſted reſources of the enemy, as a ground of confidence and of hope? Gracious God! Were we not told, five years ago, that France was not only on the brink and in the jaws of ruin, but that ſhe was actually ſunk into the gulph of bankruptcy?—When we were told, as an unanſwerable argument againſt treating, "that ſhe could not hold out another campaign—that nothing but peace could ſave her—that ſhe wanted only time to recruit her exhauſted finances—that to grant her repoſe, was to grant her the means of again moleſting this country, and that we had nothing to do but perſevere for a ſhort time, in order to ſave ourſelves for ever from the conſequences of her ambition and her Jacobiniſm!" What! after having gone on from year to year upon aſſurances like theſe, and after having ſeen the repeated refutations of every prediction, are we again to be gravely and ſeriouſly told, that we have the ſame proſpect of ſucceſs on the ſame identical grounds? And without any other argument or ſecurity, are we invited, at this new æra of the war, to carry on the war upon principles which, if adopted and acted upon, may make it eternal?—If the right honourable gentleman ſhall ſucceed in prevailing on Parliament, and the Country, to adopt the principles which he has advanced this night, I ſee no poſſible termination to the conteſt. No man can ſee an end to it; and upon the aſſurances and predictions

which have ſo uniformly failed, we are called upon, not merely to refuſe all negotiation, but to countenance principles and views as diſtant from wiſdom and juſtice, as they are in their nature wild and impracticable.

I muſt lament, Sir, in common with every genuine friend of peace, the harſh and unconciliating language which Miniſters have held to the French, and which they have even made uſe of in their anſwer to a reſpectful offer of a negotiation. Such language has ever been conſidered as extremely unwiſe, and has ever been reprobated by diplomatic men. I remember with pleaſure the terms in which Lord Malmeſbury at Paris, in the year 1796, replied to expreſſions of this ſort, uſed by M. de la Croix. He juſtly ſaid, " that offenſive and injurious inſinuations were only calculated to throw new obſtacles in the way of accommodation, and that it was not by revolting reproaches, nor by reciprocal invective, that a ſincere wiſh to accompliſh the great work of pacification could be evinced." Nothing could be more proper nor more wiſe than this language ; and ſuch ought ever to be the tone and conduct of men entruſted with the very important taſk of treating with an hoſtile nation. Being a ſincere friend to peace, I muſt ſay with Lord Malmeſbury, that it is not by reproaches and by invective that we can hope for a reconciliation ; and I am convinced, in my own mind, that I ſpeak the ſenſe of this Houſe, and, if not of this Houſe, certainly of a majority of the people of this country, when I lament that any unprovoked and unneceſſary recriminations ſhould be flung out, by which obſtacles are put in the way of pacification. I believe that it is the prevailing ſentiment of the people, that we ought to abſtain from harſh and from inſulting language; and in common with them I muſt lament, that both in the papers of Lord Grenville, and this night, ſuch licence has been given to invective and reproach. For the ſame reaſon, I muſt lament, that the right honourable gentleman has thought proper to go at ſuch length, and with ſuch ſeverity of minute inveſtigation, into all the early circumſtances of the war, which, whatever they were, are nothing to the preſent purpoſe, and ought not to influence the preſent feelings of the Houſe. I certainly ſhall not follow him into all the minute detail, though I do not agree with him in many of his aſſer-

tions. I do not know what impreſſion his narrative may make on other gentlemen; but I will tell him, fairly and candidly, he has not convinced me. I continue to think, and until I ſee better grounds for changing my opinion than any that the right honourable gentleman has this night produced, I ſhall continue to think, and to ſay, plainly and explicitly, "that this country was the aggreſſor in the war." But with regard to Auſtria and Pruſſia—is there a man who, for one moment, can diſpute that they were the aggreſſors? It will be vain for the right honourable gentleman to enter into long and plauſible reaſoning againſt the evidence of documents ſo clear, ſo deciſive—ſo frequently, ſo thoroughly inveſtigated. The unfortunate Monarch, Louis the Sixteenth, himſelf, as well as thoſe who were in his confidence, have borne deciſive teſtimony to the fact, that between him and the Emperor there was an intimate correſpondence, and a perfect underſtanding. Do I mean by this that a poſitive treaty was entered into for the diſmemberment of France? Certainly not; but no man can read the declarations which were made at Mantua, as well as at Pilnitz, as they are given by M. Bertrand de Molville, without acknowledging that this was not merely an intention, but a declaration of an intention, on the part of the great powers of Germany, to interfere in the internal affairs of France, for the purpoſe of regulating the Government, againſt the opinion of the people. This, though not a plan for the partition of France, was, in the eye of reaſon and common ſenſe, an aggreſſion againſt France. The right honourable gentleman denies that there was ſuch a thing as a treaty of Pilnitz. Granted:—but was there not a declaration which amounted to an act of hoſtile aggreſſion? The two powers, the Emperor of Germany and the King of Pruſſia, made a public declaration, that they were determined to employ their forces, in conjunction with thoſe of the other Sovereigns of Europe, "to put the King of France in a ſituation to eſtabliſh, in perfect liberty, the foundations of a Monarchical Government, equally agreeable to the rights of Sovereigns, and the welfare of the French." Whenever the other Princes ſhould agree to co-operate with them, "*then, and in that caſe*, their Majeſties were determined to act promptly, and by muual conſent, with the forces neceſſary to obtain the end propoſed

by all of them. In the mean time they declared, that they would give orders for their troops to be ready for actual ſervice." Now, I would aſk gentlemen to lay their hands upon their hearts, and ſay with candour, what the true and fair conſtruction of this declaration was—whether it was not a menace and an inſult to France, ſince, in direct terms, it declared, that whenever the other powers ſhould concur, they would attack France, then at peace with them, and then employed only in domeſtic and internal regulations? Let us ſuppoſe the caſe to be that of Great Britain—Will any gentleman ſay, that if two of the great powers ſhould make a public declaration, that they were determined to make an attack on this kingdom as ſoon as circumſtances ſhould favour their intention; that they only waited for this occaſion; and that in the mean time they would keep their forces ready for the purpoſe, —it would not be conſidered by the Parliament and People of this country as an hoſtile aggreſſion? And is there any Engliſhman in exiſtence, who is ſuch a friend to peace as to ſay, that the nation could retain its honour and dignity if it ſhould ſit down under ſuch a menace? I know too well what is due to the national character of England, to believe that there would be two opinions on the caſe, if thus put home to our own feelings and underſtanding. We muſt then reſpect in others the indignation which ſuch an act would excite in ourſelves; and when we ſee it eſtabliſhed on the moſt indiſputable teſtimony, that both at Pilnitz and at Mantua declarations were made to this effect, it is idle to ſay, that as far as the Emperor and the King of Pruſſia were concerned, they were not the aggreſſors in the war.

"Oh! but the decree of the 19th of November 1792," —that, at leaſt, the right honourable gentleman ſays, you muſt allow to be an act of aggreſſion, not only againſt England, but againſt all the Sovereigns of Europe. I am not one of thoſe, Sir, who attach much intereſt to the general and indiſcriminate provocations thrown out at random, like this reſolution of the 19th of November 1792. I do not think it neceſſary to the dignity of any people to notice and to apply to themſelves menaces flung out without particular alluſion, which are always unwiſe in the power which uſes them, and which it is ſtill more unwiſe to treat with ſerioufneſs. But if any ſuch idle

and general provocation to nations is given, either in inſolence or in folly, by any Government, it is a clear firſt principle, that an explanation is the thing which a magnanimous nation, feeling itſelf aggrieved, ought to demand; and if an explanation be given which is not ſatisfactory, it ought clearly and diſtinctly to ſay ſo. There ought to be no ambiguity, no reſerve, on the occaſion. Now, we all know, from documents on our table, that M. Chauvelin did give an explanation of this ſilly decree. He declared, "in the name of his Government, that it was never meant that the French Government ſhould favour inſurrections; that the decree was applicable only to thoſe people, who, after having acquired their liberty by conqueſt, ſhould demand the aſſiſtance of the Republic; but that France would reſpect, not only the independence of England, but alſo that of her allies with whom ſhe was not at war." This was the explanation given of the offenſive decree: "But this explanation was not ſatisfactory." Did you ſay ſo to M. Chauvelin? Did you tell him that you were not content with this explanation? and when you diſmiſſed him, afterwards, on the death of the King, did you ſay that this explanation was unſatisfactory?—No; you did no ſuch thing: and I contend, that unleſs you demanded farther explanations, and they were refuſed, you have no right to urge the decree of the 19th of November as an act of aggreſſion. In all your conferences and correſpondence with M. Chauvelin, did you hold out to him what terms would ſatisfy you? Did you give the French the power or the means of ſettling the miſunderſtanding which that decree, or any other of the points at iſſue, had created? I contend, that when a nation refuſes to ſtate to another the thing which would ſatisfy her, ſhe ſhews that ſhe is not actuated by a deſire to preſerve peace between them; and I aver, that this was the caſe here. The Scheldt, for inſtance—you now ſay, that the navigation of the Scheldt was one of your cauſes of complaint. Did you explain yourſelf on that ſubject? Did you make it one of the grounds for the diſmiſſal of M. Chauvelin? Sir, I repeat it; a nation, to juſtify itſelf in appealing to the laſt ſolemn reſort, ought to prove that it had taken every poſſible means, conſiſtent with dignity, to demand the reparation and redreſs which would be ſatisfactory; and if ſhe refuſed to explain

what would be ſatisfactory, ſhe did not do her duty, nor exonerate herſelf from the charge of being the aggreſſor.

The right honourable gentleman has this night, for the firſt time, produced a moſt important paper—the inſtructions which were given to His Majeſty's Miniſter at the Court of St. Peterſburgh, about the end of the year 1792, to intereſt Her Imperial Majeſty to join her efforts with thoſe of His Britannic Majeſty, to prevent, by their joint mediation, the evils of a general war. Of this paper, and of the exiſtence of any ſuch document, I for one was entirely ignorant; but I have no heſitation in ſaying, that I completely approve of the inſtructions which appears to have been given; and I am ſorry to ſee the right honourable gentleman diſpoſed rather to take blame to himſelf than credit for having written it. He thinks that he ſhall be ſubject to the imputation of having been rather too ſlow to apprehend the dangers with which the French Revolution was fraught, than that he was forward and haſty—"*Quod ſolum excuſat, hoc ſolum miror in illo.*" I do not agree with him on the idea of cenſure. I by no means think that he was blameable for too much confidence in the good intentions of the French. I think the tenor and compoſition of this paper was excellent—the inſtructions conveyed in it wiſe; and that it wanted but one eſſential thing to have entitled it to general approbation—namely, to be acted upon. The clear nature and intent of that paper, I take to be, that our Miniſters were to ſolicit the Court of Peterſburgh to join with them in a declaration to the French Government, ſtating explicitly what courſe of conduct, with reſpect to their foreign relations, they thought neceſſary to the general peace and ſecurity of Europe, and what, if complied with, would have induced them to mediate for that purpoſe—A proper, wiſe, and legitimate courſe of proceeding. Now, I aſk you, Sir, whether, if this paper had been communicated to Paris at the end of the year 1792, inſtead of Peterſburgh, it would not have been productive of moſt ſeaſonable benefits to mankind; and, by informing the French in time of the means by which they might have ſecured the mediation of Great Britain, have not only avoided the rupture with this country, but have alſo reſtored general peace to the Continent. The paper, Sir, was excellent in its intentions; but its

merit was all in the compoſition. It was a fine theory, which Miniſters did not think proper to carry into practice. It was very much like what the right honourable gentleman at the head of the Board of Controul (Mr. Dundas) ſaid ſome years ago, of the commercial ſyſtem upon which we have maintained our Government in the Eaſt Indies: "Nothing could be more moral, more beautiful, and benevolent, than the inſtructions which were ſent out to our Governors;" but unfortunately thoſe inſtructions had been confined to the regiſters of the Corporation; they were to be found only in the minute-books of Leadenhall Street—their beneficial effects had never been felt by the people, for whoſe protection and happineſs the theories were framed." In the ſame manner, this very commendable paper, ſo well digeſted, and ſo likely to preſerve us from the calamities of war, was never communicated to the French; never acted upon, never known to the world until this day; nay, on the contrary, at the very time that Miniſters had drawn up this paper, they were inſulting M. Chauvelin, in every way, until about the 23d or 24th of January 1793, when they finally diſmiſſed him, without ſtating any one ground upon which they were willing to preſerve terms with the French.

"But France," it ſeems, "then declared war againſt us; and ſhe was the aggreſſor, becauſe the declaration came from her."—Let us look at the circumſtances of this tranſaction on both ſides. Undoubtedly the declaration was made by them; but is a declaration the only thing which conſtitutes the commencement of a war? Do gentlemen recollect, that, in conſequence of a diſpute about the commencement of war, reſpecting the capture of a number of ſhips, an article was inſerted in our treaty with France, by which it was poſitively ſtipulated, that in future, to prevent all diſputes, the act of the diſmiſſal of a Miniſter from either of the two Courts, ſhould be held and conſidered as tantamount to a declaration of war? I mention this, Sir, becauſe when we are idly employed in this retroſpect of the origin of a war which has laſted ſo many years, inſtead of fixing our eyes only to the contemplation of the means of putting an end to it, we ſeem diſpoſed to overlook every thing on our own parts, and to ſearch only for grounds of imputation on the enemy. I almoſt think it an

inſult on the Houſe to detain them with this ſort of examination. Why, Sir, if France was the aggreſſor, as the right honourable gentleman ſays ſhe was throughout—why did not Pruſſia call upon us for the ſtipulated number of troops, according to the article of the defenſive treaty of alliance ſubſiſting between us, by which, in caſe that either of the contracting parties was attacked, they had a right to demand the ſtipulated aid? and the ſame thing again may be aſked when we were attacked. The right honourable gentleman might here accuſe himſelf, indeed, of reſerve; but it unfortunately happened, that at the time the point was too clear on which ſide the aggreſſion lay. Pruſſia was too ſenſible that the war could not entitle her to make the demand, and that it was not a caſe within the ſcope of the defenſive treaty. This is evidence worth a volume of ſubſequent reaſoning; for if, at the time when all the facts were preſent to their minds, they could not take advantage of exiſting treaties, and that too when the Courts were on the moſt friendly terms with one another, it will be manifeſt to every thinking man that they were ſenſible they were not authoriſed to make the demand.

'I really, Sir, cannot think it neceſſary to follow the right honourable gentleman into all the minute details which he has thought proper to give us reſpecting the firſt aggreſſion; but that Auſtria and Pruſſia were the aggreſſors, not a man in any country, who has ever given himſelf the trouble to think at all on the ſubject, can doubt. Nothing could be more hoſtile than their whole proceedings. Did they not declare to France, that it was their internal concerns, not their external proceedings, which provoked them to confederate againſt her. Look back to the proclamations with which they ſet out—Read the declarations which they made themſelves, to juſtify their appeal to arms—They did not pretend to fear their ambition—their conqueſts—their troubling their neighbours; but they accuſed them of new-modelling their own Government. They ſaid nothing of their aggreſſions abroad; they ſpoke only of their clubs and ſocieties at Paris.

Sir, in all this, I am not juſtifying the French—I am not ſtriving to abſolve them from blame—either in their internal or external policy. I think, on the contrary, that their ſucceſſive Rulers have been as bad and as execrable in various in-

ſtances, as any of the moſt deſpotic and unprincipled Governments that the world ever ſaw. I think it impoſſible, Sir, that it ſhould have been otherwiſe. It was not to be expected that the French, when once engaged in foreign wars, ſhould not endeavour to ſpread deſtruction around them, and to form plans of aggrandizement and plunder on every ſide. Men bred in the ſchool of the Houſe of Bourbon could not be expected to act otherwiſe. They could not have lived ſo long under their antient maſters, without imbibing the reſtleſs ambition, the perfidy, and the inſatiable ſpirit of the race. They have imitated the practice of their great prototype, and, through their whole career of miſchief and of crimes, have done no more than ſervilely trace the ſteps of their own Louis XIV. If they have over-run countries, and ravaged them, they have done it upon Bourbon principles. If they have ruined and dethroned Sovereigns, it is entirely after the Bourbon manner.—If they have even fraternized with the people of foreign countries, and pretended to make their cauſe their own, they have only faithfully followed the Bourbon example. They have conſtantly had Louis, the grand Monarque, in their eye. But it may be ſaid, that this example was long ago, and that we ought not to refer to a period ſo diſtant. True, it is a diſtant period applied to the man, but not ſo of the principle. The principle was never extinct; nor has its operation been ſuſpended in France, except, perhaps, for a ſhort interval, during the adminiſtration of Cardinal Fleury; and my complaint againſt the Republic of France is, not that ſhe has generated new crimes—not that ſhe has promulgated new miſchief—but that ſhe has adopted and acted upon the principles which have been ſo fatal to Europe, under the practice of the Houſe of Bourbon. It is ſaid, that wherever the French have gone, they have introduced Revolution—they have ſought for the means of diſturbing neighbouring States, and have not been content with mere conqueſt. What is this but adopting the ingenious ſcheme of Louis XIV? He was not content with merely over-running a State;—whenever he came into a new territory, he eſtabliſhed what he called his Chamber of Claims; a moſt convenient device, by which he inquired, whether the conquered country or province had any dormant or diſputed claims—any cauſe of complaint—any

unſettled demand upon any other State or Province—upon which he might wage war upon ſuch State, thereby diſcover again ground for new devaſtation, and gratify his ambition by new acquiſitions. What have the Republicans done more atrocious, more Jacobinical, than this? Louis went to war with Holland—His pretext was, that Holland had not treated him with ſufficient reſpect;—a very juſt and proper cauſe for war indeed. This, Sir, leads me to an example which I think ſeaſonable, and worthy the attention of His Majeſty's Miniſters. When our Charles II. as a ſhort exception to the policy of his reign, made the triple alliance for the protection of Europe, and particularly of Holland, againſt the ambition of Louis XIV. what was the conduct of that great, virtuous, and moſt able Stateſman, M. de Witt, when the confederates came to deliberate on the terms upon which they ſhould treat with the French Monarch? When it was ſaid that he had made unprincipled conqueſts, and that he ought to be forced to ſurrender them all, what was the language of that great and wiſe man? "No," ſaid he; "I think we ought not to look back to the origin of the war, ſo much as the means of putting an end to it. If you had united in time to prevent theſe conqueſts, well; but, now that he has made them, he ſtands upon the ground of conqueſt, and we muſt agree to treat with him, not with reference to the origin of the conqueſt, but with regard to his preſent poſture. He has thoſe places, and ſome of them we muſt be content to give up as the means of peace—for conqueſt will always ſucceſsfully ſet up its claims to indemnification." Such was the language of this Miniſter, who was the ornament of his time; and ſuch, in my mind, ought to be the language of Stateſmen, with regard to the French, at this day; and the ſame ought to have been ſaid at the formation of the Confederacy. It was true that the French had over-run Savoy; but they had over-run it upon Bourbon principles; and having gained this and other conqueſts before the Confederacy was formed, they ought to have treated with her rather for future ſecurity, than for paſt correction. States in poſſeſſion, whether Monarchical or Republican, will claim indemnity in proportion to their ſucceſs; and it will never ſo much be inquired by what right they gained poſſeſſion, as by what means they

can be prevented from enlarging their depredations. Such is the ſafe practice of the world; and ſuch ought to have been the conduct of the powers when the reduction of Savoy made them coaleſce. The right honourable gentleman may know more of the ſecret particulars of their over-running Savoy than I do; but certainly, as they have came to my knowledge, it was a moſt Bourbon-like act. A great and juſtly celebrated hiſtorian, whom I will not call a foreigner—I mean Mr. Hume (a writer, certainly, eſtimable in many particulars, but who is a childiſh lover of Princes)—talks of Louis XIV. in very magnificent terms; but he ſays of him, that, though he managed his enterprizes with ſkill and bravery, he was unfortunate in this, that he never got a good and fair pretence for war. This he reckons among his misfortunes! Can we ſay more of the Republican French? In ſeizing on Savoy, I think they made uſe of the words, "*convenances morales et phyſiques.*" Theſe were her reaſons. A moſt Bourbon-like phraſe! And I therefore contend, that as we never ſcrupled to treat with the Princes of the Houſe of Bourbon on account of their rapacity, their thirſt of conqueſt, their violation of treaties, their perfidy, and their reſtleſs ſpirit; ſo, I contend, we ought not to refuſe to treat with their Republican imitators.

Miniſters could not pretend ignorance of the unprincipled manner in which the French had ſeized on Savoy. The Sardinian Miniſter complained of the aggreſſion, and yet no ſtir was made about it. The Courts of Europe ſtood by, and ſaw the outrage; and our Miniſters ſaw it. The right honourable gentleman will in vain, therefore, exert his powers to perſuade me of the intereſt he takes in the preſervation of the rights of nations, ſince, at the moment when an interference might have been made with effect, no ſtep was taken, no remonſtrance made, no mediation negotiated, to ſtop the career of conqueſt. All the pretended and hypocritical ſenſibility "for the rights of nations, and for ſocial order," with which we have ſince been ſtunned, cannot impoſe upon thoſe who will take the trouble to look back to the period when this ſenſibility ought to have roufed us into ſeaſonable exertion. At that time, however, the right honourable gentleman makes it his boaſt, that he was prevented, by a ſenſe of neutrality, from

taking any meaſures of precaution on the ſubject. I do not give the right honourable gentleman much credit for his ſpirit of neutrality on the occaſion. It flowed from the ſenſe of the country at the time, the great majority of which was clearly and decidedly againſt all interruptions being given to the French in their deſire of regulating their own internal Government.

But this neutrality, which reſpected only the internal rights of the French, and from which the people of England would never have departed but for the impolitic and hypocritical cant which was ſet up to arouſe their jealouſy and alarm their fears, was very different from the great principle of political prudence which ought to have actuated the Councils of the nation, on ſeeing the firſt ſteps of France towards a career of external conqueſt. My opinion is, that when the unfortunate King of France offered to us, in the letter delivered by M. Chauvelin and M. Talleyrand, and even intreated us to mediate between him and the allied powers of Auſtria and Pruſſia, they ought to have accepted of the offer, and exerted their influenee to ſave Europe from the conſequence of a ſyſtem which was then beginning to manifeſt itſelf. It was, at leaſt, a queſtion of prudence; and as we had never refuſed to treat and to mediate with the old Princes on account of their ambition or their perfidy, we ought to have been equally ready now, when the ſame principles were acted upon by other men. I muſt doubt the ſenſibility which could be ſo cold and ſo indifferent at the proper moment for its activity. I fear that there were at that moment the germs of ambition riſing in the mind of the right honourable gentleman, and that he was beginning, like others, to entertain hopes that ſomething might be obtained out of the coming confuſion. What but ſuch a ſentiment could have prevented him from overlooking the fair occaſion that was offered for preventing the calamities with which Europe was threatened? What but ſome ſuch intereſted principle could have made him forego the truly honourable taſk, by which his adminiſtration would have diſplayed its magnanimity and its power? But for ſome ſuch feeling, would not this country, both in wiſdom and in dignity, have interfered, and, in conjunction with the other powers, have ſaid to France, "You aſk for a mediation;

we will mediate with candour and ſincerity, but we will at the ſame time declare to you our apprehenſions. We do not truſt to your aſſertion of a determination to avoid all foreign conqueſt, and that you are deſirous only of ſettling your own Conſtitution, becauſe your language is contradicted by experience and the evidence of facts. You are Frenchmen, and you ca not ſo ſoon have forgotten and thrown off the Bourbon prir iples in which you were educated. You have already imitated the bad practice of your Princes; you have ſeized on Savoy without a colour of right.—But here we take our ſtand. Thus far you have gone, and we cannot help it; but you muſt go no farther. We will tell you diſtinctly what we ſhall conſider as an attack on the balance and the ſecurity of Europe; and, as the condition of our interference, we will tell you alſo the ſecurities that we think eſſential to the general repoſe." This ought to have been the language of His Majeſty's Miniſters when their mediation was ſolicited; and ſomething of this kind they evidently thought of when they ſent the inſtructions to Peterſburgh which they have mentioned this night, but upon which they never acted. Having not done ſo, I ſay; they have no right to talk now about the violated rights of Europe—about the aggreſſion of the French—and about the origin of the war, in which this country was ſo ſuddenly afterwards plunged. Inſtead of this, what did they do? They hung back; they avoided explanation; they gave the French no means of ſatisfying them; and I repeat my propoſition—when there is a queſtion of peace and war between two nations, that Government feels itſelf in the wrong which refuſes to ſtate with clearneſs and preciſion what ſhe ſhould conſider as a ſatisfaction and a pledge of peace.

Sir, if I underſtand the true precepts of the Chriſtian religion, as ſet forth in the New Teſtament, I muſt be permitted to ſay, that there is no ſuch thing as a rule or doctrine by which we are directed, or can be juſtified, in waging a war for religion. The idea is ſubverſive of the very foundations upon which it ſtands, which are thoſe of peace and good-will among men. Religion never was, and never can be, a juſtifiable cauſe of war; but it has been too often groſsly uſed as the pretext and the apology for the moſt unprincipled wars.

I have already ſaid, and I repeat it, that the conduct of the French to foreign nations cannot be juſtified. They have given great cauſe of offence, but certainly not to all countries alike. The right honourable gentlemen oppoſite to me have made an indiſcriminate catalogue of all the countries which the French have offended, and, in their eagerneſs to throw odium on the nation, have taken no pains to inveſtigate the ſources of their ſeveral quarrels. I will not detain you, Sir, by entering into the long detail which has been given of their aggreſſions and their violences; but let me mention Sardinia as one inſtance which has been ſtrongly inſiſted upon. Did the French attack Sardinia when at peace with them? No ſuch thing. The King of Sardinia had accepted of a ſubſidy from Great Britain; and Sardinia was, to all intents and purpoſes, a belligerent power. Several other inſtances might be mentioned; but though, perhaps, in the majority of inſtances, the French may be unjuſtifiable, is this the moment for us to dwell upon theſe enormities—to waſte our time, and inflame our paſſions, by criminating and recriminating upon each other? There is no end to ſuch a war. I have ſomewhere read, I think in Sir Walter Raleigh's Hiſtory of the World, of a moſt bloody and fatal battle which was fought by two oppoſite armies, in which almoſt all the combatants on both ſides were killed, "becauſe," ſays the hiſtorian, "though they had offenſive weapons on both ſides, they had none for defence." So, in this war of words, if we are to uſe only offenſive weapons—if we are to indulge only in invective and abuſe, the conteſt muſt be eternal.

If this war of reproach and invective is to be countenanced, may not the French with equal reaſon complain of the outrages and the horrors committed by the powers oppoſed to them? If we muſt not treat with the French on account of the iniquity of their former tranſactions, ought we not to be as ſcrupulous of connecting ourſelves with other powers equally criminal? Surely, Sir, if we muſt be thus rigid in ſcrutinizing the conduct of an enemy, we ought to be equally careful in not committing ourſelves, our honour, and our ſafety, with an ally, who has manifeſted the ſame want of reſpect for the rights of other nations. Surely, if it is material to know the character of a power with whom you are about only

to treat for peace; it is more material to know the character of allies, with whom you are about to enter into the closeſt connection of friendſhip, and for whoſe exertions you are about to pay. Now, Sir, what was the conduct of your own allies to Poland? Is there a ſingle atrocity of the French, in Italy, in Switzerland, in Egypt if you pleaſe, more unprincipled and inhuman, than that of Ruſſia, Auſtria, and Pruſſia, in Poland? What has there been in the conduct of the French to foreign powers; what in the violation of ſolemn treaties; what in the plunder, devaſtation, and diſmemberment of unoffending countries; what in the horrors and murders perpetrated upon the ſubdued victims of their rage in any diſtrict which they have over-run, worſe than the conduct of thoſe three great powers, in the miſerable, devoted, and trampled-on kingdom of Poland, and who have been, or are, our allies in this war for religion and ſocial order, and the rights of nations? "Oh! but you *regretted* the partition of Poland!" Yes, regretted! you regretted the violence, and that is all you did. You united yourſelves with the actors; you, in fact, by your acquieſcence, confirmed the atrocity. But they are your allies; and though they over-run and divided Poland, there was nothing, perhaps, in the *manner* of doing it, which ſtamped it with peculiar infamy and diſgrace. The hero of Poland, perhaps, was merciful and mild! He was "as much ſuperior to Bonaparte in bravery, and in the "diſcipline which he maintained, as he was ſuperior in "virtue and humanity!" He was animated by the pureſt principles of Chriſtianity, and was reſtrained in his career by the benevolent precepts which it inculcates! Was he? Let unfortunate Warſaw, and the miſerable inhabitants of the ſuburb of Praga in particular, tell! What do we underſtand to have been the conduct of this magnanimous hero, with whom, it ſeems, Bonaparte is not to be compared? He entered the ſuburb of Praga, the moſt populous ſuburb of Warſaw; and there he let his ſoldiery looſe on the miſerable, unarmed and unreſiſting people. Men, women, and children, nay, infants at the breaſt, were doomed to one indiſcriminate maſſacre! Thouſands of them were inhumanly, wantonly butchered! And for what? Becauſe they had dared to join in a wiſh to meliorate their own condition as a people,

and to improve their Conſtitution, which had been confeſſed by their own Sovereign to be in want of amendment. And ſuch is the hero upon whom the cauſe of religion and ſocial order is to repoſe! And ſuch is the man whom we praiſe for his diſcipline and his virtue, and whom we hold out as our boaſt and our dependence; while the conduct of Bonaparte unfits him to be even treated with as an enemy!

But the behaviour of the French towards Switzerland raiſes all the indignation of the right honourable gentleman, and inflames his eloquence. I admire the indignation which he expreſſes (and I think he felt it) in ſpeaking of this country, ſo dear and ſo congenial to every man who loves the ſacred name of Liberty. He who loves Liberty, ſays the right honourable gentleman, thought himſelf at home on the favoured and happy mountains of Switzerland, where ſhe ſeemed to have taken up her abode under a ſort of implied compact, among all other States, that ſhe ſhould not be diſturbed in this her choſen aſylum. I admire the eloquence of the right honourable gentleman in ſpeaking of this country, of liberty and peace, to which every man would deſire, once in his life at leaſt, to make a pilgrimage! But who, let me aſk him, firſt propoſed to the Swiſs people to depart from the neutrality, which was their chief protection, and to join the confederacy againſt the French? I aver, that a noble relation of mine (Lord Robert Fitzgerald), then the Miniſter of England to the Swiſs Cantons, was inſtructed, in direct terms, to propoſe to the Swiſs, by an official note, to break from the ſafe line they had laid down for themſelves, and to tell them, "in ſuch a conteſt neutrality was criminal."—I know that noble Lord too well, though I have not been in habits of intercourſe with him of late, from the employments in which he has been engaged, to ſuſpect that he would have preſented ſuch a paper without the expreſs inſtructions of his Court, or that he would have gone beyond thoſe inſtructions.

But was it only to Switzerland that this ſort of language was held? What was our language alſo to Tuſcany and to Genoa? An honourable gentleman (Mr. Canning) has denied the authenticity of a pretended letter which has been circulated, and aſcribed to Lord Harvey. He ſays, it is all a fable and a forgery. Be it ſo; but is it alſo a fable that

Lord Harvey did ſpeak in terms to the Grand Duke, which he conſidered as offenſive and inſulting? I cannot tell, for I was not preſent; but was it not, and is it not believed? Is it a fable that Lord Harvey went into the cloſet of the Grand Duke, laid his watch upon the table, and demanded, in a peremptory manner, that he ſhould, within a certain number of minutes, I think I have heard, within a quarter of an hour, determine, aye or no, to diſmiſs the French Miniſter, and order him out of his dominions; with the menace, that if he did not, the Engliſh fleet ſhould bombard Leghorn? Will the honourable gentleman deny this alſo? I certainly do not know it from my own knowledge; but I know, that perſons of the firſt credit, then at Florence, have ſtated theſe facts, and that they have never been contradicted. It is true, that upon the Grand Duke's complaint of this indignity, Lord Harvey was recalled; but was the principle recalled? was the miſſion recalled? Did not Miniſters perſiſt in the demand which Lord Harvey had made, perhaps ungraciouſly? and was not the Grand Duke forced, in conſequence, to diſmiſs the French Miniſter? and did they not drive him to enter into an unwilling war with the Republic? It is true that he afterwards made his peace; and that, having done ſo, he was treated ſeverely and unjuſtly by the French: but what do I conclude from all this, but that we have no right to be ſcrupulous, we who have violated the reſpect due to peaceable powers ourſelves, in this war, which, more than any other that ever afflicted human nature, has been diſtinguiſhed by the greateſt number of diſguſting and outrageous inſults to the ſmaller powers by the great—And I infer from this alſo, that the inſtances not being confined to the French, but having been perpetrated by every one of the allies, and by England as much as by others, we have no right, either in perſonal character, or from our own deportment, to refuſe to treat with the French on this ground.— Need I ſpeak of your conduct to Genoa alſo? Perhaps the note delivered by Mr. Drake was alſo a forgery. Perhaps the blockade of the port never took place. It is impoſſible to deny the facts, which were ſo glaring at the time. It is a painful thing to me, Sir, to be obliged to go back to theſe unfortunate periods of the hiſtory of this war, and of the conduct of this country; but I

am forced to the taſk by the uſe which has been made of the atrocities of the French as an argument againſt negotiation. I think I have ſaid enough to prove, that if the French have been guilty, we have not been innocent. Nothing but determined incredulity can make us deaf and blind to our own acts, when we are ſo ready to yield an aſſent to all the reproaches which are thrown out on the enemy, and upon which reproaches we are gravely told to continue the war.

" But the French," it ſeems, " have behaved ill every where. They ſeized on Venice, which had preſerved the moſt exact neutrality, or rather" as it is hinted, " had manifeſted ſymptoms of friendſhip to them." I agree with the right honourable gentleman, it was an abominable act. I am not the apologiſt of, much leſs the advocate for their iniquities; neither will I countenance them in their pretences for the injuſtice. I do not think that much regard is to be paid to the charges which a triumphant ſoldiery bring on the conduct of a people whom they have over-run. Pretences for outrage will never be wanting to the ſtrong, when they wiſh to trample on the weak; but when we accuſe the French of having ſeized on Venice, after ſtipulating for its neutrality, and guaranteeing its independence, we ſhould alſo remember the excuſe that they made for the violence—namely, that their troops had been attacked and murdered. I ſay I am always incredulous about ſuch excuſes; but I think it fair to hear whatever can be alledged on the other ſide. We cannot take one ſide of a ſtory only. Candour demands that we ſhould examine the whole before we make up our minds on the guilt. I cannot think it quite fair to ſtate the view of the ſubject of one party as indiſputable fact, without even mentioning what the other party has to ſay for itſelf. But, Sir, is this all? Though the perfidy of the French to the Venetians be clear and palpable, was it worſe in morals, in principle, and in example, than the conduct of Auſtria? My honourable friend (Mr. Whitbread) properly aſked, " Is not the receiver as bad as the thief?" If the French ſeized on the territory of Venice, did not the Auſtrians agree to receive it? " But this," it ſeems, " is not the ſame thing." It is quite in the nature, and within the rule of diplomatic morality, for Auſtria to receive the country which was thus ſeized upon

unjuſtly. "The Emperor took it as a compenſation; it was his by barter; he was not anſwerable for the guilt by which it was obtained." What is this, Sir, but the falſe and abominable reaſoning with which we have been ſo often diſguſted on the ſubject of the ſlave trade? Juſt in the ſame manner have I heard a notorious wholeſale dealer in this inhuman traffic, juſtify his abominable trade. "I am not guilty of the horrible crime of tearing that mother from her infants; that huſband from his wife; of depopulating that village; of depriving that family of their ſons, the ſupport of their aged parents!—No; thank Heaven! I am not guilty of this horror; I only bought them in the fair way of trade. They were brought to the market; they had been guilty of crimes, or they had been made priſoners in war; they were accuſed of witchcraft, of obi, or of ſome other ſort of ſorcery; and they were brought to me for ſale; I gave a valuable conſideration for them; but God forbid that I ſhould have ſtained my ſoul with the guilt of dragging them from their friends and families!" Such has been the precious defence of the ſlave trade; and ſuch is the argument ſet up for Auſtria, in this inſtance of Venice. "I did not commit the crime of trampling on the independence of Venice. I did not ſeize on the city; I gave a *quid pro quo*. It was a matter of barter and indemnity; I gave half a million of human beings to be put under the yoke of France in another diſtrict, and I had theſe people turned over to me in return!" This, Sir, is the defence of Auſtria; and under ſuch deteſtable ſophiſtry as this, is the infernal traffic in human fleſh, whether in white or black, to be continued, and even juſtified! At no time has that diabolical traffic been carried to a greater length than during the preſent war; and that by England herſelf, as well as Auſtria and Ruſſia.

"But France," it ſeems, "has rouſed all the nations of Europe againſt her;" and the long catalogue has been read to you, to prove that ſhe muſt have been atrocious to provoke them all. Is it true, Sir, that ſhe has rouſed them all? It does not ſay much for the addreſs of His Majeſty's Miniſters, if this be the caſe. What, Sir! have all your negotiations, all your declamation, all your money, been ſquandered in vain? Have you not ſucceeded in ſtirring the indignation, and en-

gaging the aſſiſtance, of a ſingle power? But you do yourſelves injuſtice. I dare ſay the truth lies between you—Between their crimes and your money the rage has been excited; and full as much is due to your ſeductions, as to her atrocities. My honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erſkine) was correct, therefore, in his argument; for you cannot take both ſides of the caſe: you cannot accuſe them of having provoked all Europe, and at the ſame time claim the merit of having rouſed them to join you.

You talk of your allies. Sir, I wiſh to know who your allies are? Ruſſia is one of them, I ſuppoſe. Did France attack Ruſſia? Has the magnanimous Paul taken the field for ſocial order and religion, on account of perſonal aggreſſion? The Emperor of Ruſſia has declared himſelf Grand Maſter of Malta, though his religion is as oppoſite to that of the Knights, as ours is; and he is as much conſidered an heretic by the church of Rome, as we are. The King of Great Britain might, with as much reaſon and propriety, declare himſelf the head of the order of the Chartreuſe Monks; for he, as well as we, were conſidered as heretics by the Pope. Not content with taking to himſelf the commandery of this inſtitution of Malta, Paul has even created a married man a knight, contrary to all the moſt ſacred rules and regulations of the order. And yet this ally of ours is fighting for religion!—So much for his religion: Let us ſee his regard to ſocial order! How does he ſhew his abhorrence of the principles of the French, in their violation of the rights of other nations? What has been his conduct to Denmark? He ſays to Denmark—"You have ſeditious clubs at Copenhagen—No Daniſh veſſel ſhall enter the ports of Ruſſia!" He holds a ſtill more deſpotic language to Hamburgh. He threatens to lay an embargo on their trade; and he forces them to ſurrender up men who are claimed by the French as their citizens—whether truly or not, I do not inquire. He threatens them with his own vengeance if they refuſe, and ſubjects them to that of the French if they comply. And what has been his conduct to Spain? He firſt ſends away the Spaniſh miniſter from Peterſburgh, and then complains, as a great inſult, that his miniſter was diſmiſſed from Madrid!—This is one of our allies; and he has declared that the object for which he has taken up arms, is to replace the antient race of

the Houſe of Bourbon on the Throne of France, and that he does this for the cauſe of religion and ſocial order! Such is the reſpect for religion and ſocial order which he himſelf diſplays; and ſuch are the examples of it with which we coaleſce!

No man regrets, Sir, more than I do, the enormities that France has committed; but how do they bear upon the queſtion as it now ſtands? Are we for ever to deprive ourſelves of the benefits of peace, becauſe France has perpetrated acts of injuſtice? Sir, we cannot acquit ourſelves upon ſuch ground. We have negotiated. With the knowledge of theſe acts of injuſtice and diſorder, we have treated with them twice; yet the right honourable gentleman cannot enter into negotiation with them now; and it is worth while to attend to the reaſons that he gives for refuſing their offer. The Revolution itſelf is no more an objection now, than it was in the year 1796, when he did negotiate; for the Government of France at that time was ſurely as unſtable as it is now. The crimes of the French, the inſtability of their government, did not then prevent him; and why are they to prevent him now? He negotiated with a government as unſtable, and, baffled in that negotiation, he did not ſcruple to open another at Liſle in the year 1797. We have heard a very curious account of theſe negotiations this day, and, as the right honourable gentleman has emphatically told us, an *honeſt* account of them. He ſays he has no ſcruple in avowing that he apprehended danger from the ſucceſs of his own efforts to procure a pacification, and that he was not diſpleaſed at its failure. He was ſincere in his endeavours to treat, but he was not diſappointed when they failed. I wiſh to underſtand the right honourable gentleman correctly — His declaration on the ſubject, then, I take to be this—that though ſincere in his endeavours to procure peace in 1797, yet he apprehended greater danger from accompliſhing his object, than from the continuance of war; and that he felt this apprehenſion from the comparative views of the probable ſtate of peace and war at that time. I hope I ſtate the right honourable gentleman correctly. I have no heſitation in allowing the fact, that a ſtate of peace, immediately after a war of ſuch violence, muſt, in ſome reſpects, be a ſtate of inſecurity; but does this not belong, in a certain degree, to all wars? And are

we never to have peace, becauſe that peace may be inſecure? But there was ſomething, it ſeems, ſo peculiar in this war, and in the character and principles of the enemy, that the right honourable gentleman thought a peace in 1797 would be comparatively more dangerous than war. Why then did he treat? I beg the attention of the Houſe to this—He treated, "becauſe the unequivocal ſenſe of the people of England was declared to be in favour of a negotiation." The right honourable gentleman confeſſes the truth, then, that in 1797 the people were for peace. I thought ſo at the time; but you all recollect, that when I ſtated it in my place, it was denied:—"True," they ſaid, "you have procured petitions; but we have petitions too—we all know in what ſtrange ways petitions may be procured, and how little they deſerve to be conſidered as the ſenſe of the people." This was their language at the time; but now we find theſe petitions did ſpeak the ſenſe of the people, and that it was, on this ſide of the Houſe, only, the ſenſe of the people was ſpoken: The majority ſpoke a contrary language! It is acknowledged then, that the unequivocal ſenſe of the people of England may be ſpoken by the minority of this Houſe, and that it is not always by the teſt of numbers that an honeſt deciſion is to be aſcertained. This Houſe decided againſt what the right honourable gentleman knew to be the ſenſe of the country; but he himſelf acted upon that ſenſe againſt the vote of Parliament.

The negotiation in 1796 went off, as my honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erſkine) has ſaid, upon the queſtion of Belgium; or, as the right honourable gentleman aſſerts, upon a queſtion of principle. He negotiated to pleaſe the people, but it went off "on account of a monſtrous principle advanced by France, incompatible with all negotiation." This is now ſaid. Did the right honourable gentleman ſay ſo at the time? Did he fairly and candidly inform the people of England, that they broke off the negotiation becauſe the French had urged a baſis that it was totally impoſſible for England at any time to grant? No ſuch thing. On the contrary, when the negotiation broke off, they publiſhed a manifeſto, "renewing, in the face of Europe, the ſolemn declaration, that whenever the enemy ſhould be diſpoſed to enter on the work of a general pacification, in a ſpirit of conciliation and equity,

nothing ſhould be wanting on their part to contribute to the accompliſhment of that great object."—And accordingly, in the year 1797, notwithſtanding this incompatible principle, and with all the enormities of the French on their heads, they opened a new negotiation at Liſle. They do not wait for any retractation of this incompatible principle; they do not wait even till overtures ſhall be made to them; but they ſolicit and renew a negotiation themſelves. I do not blame them for this, Sir; I ſay only that it is an argument againſt the aſſertion of an incompatible principle. It is a proof that they did not then think as the right honourable gentleman now ſays they thought; but that they yielded to the ſentiments of the nation, who were generally inclined to peace, againſt their own judgment; and, from a motive which I ſhall come to by and by, they had no heſitation, on account of the firſt rupture, to renew the negotiation—it was renewed at Liſle; and this the French broke off, after the revolution at Paris on the 4th of September. What was the conduct of Miniſters upon this occaſion? One would have thought, that, with the freſh inſult at Liſle in their minds, with the recollection of their failure the year before at Paris, if it had been true that they found an incompatible principle, they would have talked a warlike language, and would have announced to their country and to all Europe, that peace was not to be obtained; that they muſt throw away the ſcabbard, and think only of the means of continuing the conteſt—No ſuch thing. They put forth a declaration, in which they ſaid, that they ſhould look with anxious expectation for the moment when the Government of France ſhould ſhew a diſpoſition and ſpirit correſponding with their own; and renewing before all Europe the ſolemn declaration, that at the very moment when the brilliant victory of Lord Duncan might have juſtified them to demand more extravagant terms, they were willing, if the calamities of war could be cloſed, to conclude peace on the ſame moderate and equitable principles and terms which they had before propoſed. Such was their declaration upon that occaſion; and in the diſcuſſions which we had upon it in this Houſe, Miniſters were explicit. They ſaid, that by that negotiation, there had been given to the world what might be regarded as an unequivocal teſt of the ſincerity and diſpoſition of a govern-

ment towards peace, or againſt it ; for thoſe who refuſe diſcuſſion, ſhew that they are diſinclined to pacification ; and it is therefore, they ſaid, always to be conſidered as a teſt, that the party who refuſes to negotiate, is the party who is diſinclined to peace. This they themſelves ſet up as the teſt. Try them now, Sir, by that teſt. An offer is made them. They raſhly, and I think rudely, refuſe it. Have they, or have they not, broken their own teſt ?

But, they ſay, " they have not refuſed all diſcuſſion." They have put a caſe. They have expreſſed a wiſh for the reſtoration of the Houſe of Bourbon, and have declared that to be an event which would immediately remove every obſtacle to negotiation. Sir, as to the reſtoration of the Houſe of Bourbon, if it ſhall be the wiſh of the people of France, I for one ſhall be perfectly content to acquieſce. I think the people of France, as well as every other people, ought to have the Government which they like beſt themſelves ; and the form of that Government, or the perſons who hold it in their hands, ſhould never be an obſtacle with me to treat with the nation for peace, or to live with them in amity—But as an Engliſhman, Sir, and actuated by Engliſh feelings, I ſurely cannot wiſh for the reſtoration of the Houſe of Bourbon to the Throne of France. I hope that I am not a man to bear heavily upon any unfortunate family. I feel for their ſituation—I reſpect their diſtreſſes—But as a friend of England, I cannot wiſh for their reſtoration to the power which they abuſed. I cannot forget that the whole hiſtory of the century is little more than an account of the wars and the calamities ariſing from the reſtleſs ambition, the intrigues, and the perfidy of the Houſe of Bourbon.

I cannot diſcover, in any part of the laboured defence which has been ſet up for not accepting the offer now made by France, any argument to ſatisfy my mind that Miniſters have not forfeited the teſt which they held out as infallible in 1797. An honourable gentleman (Mr. Canning) thinks that Parliament ſhould be eager only to approach the Throne with declarations of their readineſs and reſolution to ſupport His Majeſty in the farther proſecution of the war without inquiry ; and he is quite delighted with an addreſs, which he has found upon the Journals, to King William, in which

they pledged themſelves to ſupport him in his efforts to reſiſt the ambition of Louis XIV. He thinks it quite aſtoniſhing how much it is in point, and how perfectly it applies to the preſent occaſion. One would have thought, Sir, that in order to prove the application, he would have ſhewn that an offer had been reſpectfully made by the Grand Monarch to King William, to treat, which he had peremptorily, and in very irritating terms, refuſed; and that, upon this, the Houſe of Commons had come forward, and, with one voice, declared their determination to ſtand by him, with their lives and fortunes, in proſecuting the juſt and neceſſary war. Not a word of all this; and yet the honourable gentleman finds it quite a parallel caſe, and an exact model for the Houſe, on this day, to purſue. I really think, Sir, he might as well have taken any other addreſs upon the Journals, upon any other topic, as this addreſs to King William.—It would have been equally in point, and would have equally ſerved to ſhew the honourable gentleman's talent for reaſoning.

Sir, I cannot here overlook another inſtance of this honourable gentleman's candid ſtile of debating, and of his reſpect for Parliament. He has found out, it ſeems, that in former periods of our hiſtory, and even in periods which have been denominated good times, intercepted letters have been publiſhed; and he reads, from the Gazette, inſtances of ſuch publication. Really, Sir, if the honourable gentleman had purſued the profeſſion to which he turned his thoughts when younger, he would have learnt that it was neceſſary to find caſes a little more in point. And yet, full of his triumph on this notable diſcovery, he has choſen to indulge himſelf in ſpeaking of a moſt reſpectable and a moſt honourable perſon as any that this country knows, and who is poſſeſſed of as ſound an underſtanding as any man that I have the good fortune to be acquainted with, in terms the moſt offenſive and diſguſting, on account of words which he may be ſuppoſed to have ſaid in another place, [alluding to the Duke of Bedford's ſpeech in the Houſe of Lords.] He has ſpoken of that noble perſon, and of his intellect, in terms which, were I diſpoſed to retort, I might ſay, ſhew himſelf to be poſſeſſed of an intellect which would juſtify me in paſſing over in ſilence any thing that comes from ſuch a man. Sir, the noble perſon

did not ſpeak of the mere act of publiſhing the intercepted correſpondence; and the honourable gentleman's reference to the Gazettes of former periods is, therefore, not in point. The noble Duke complained of the manner in which theſe intercepted letters had been publiſhed, not of the fact itſelf of their publication; for, in the introduction and notes to thoſe letters, the *ribaldry* is ſuch, that they are not ſcreened from the execration of every honourable mind even by their extreme ſtupidity. The honourable gentleman ſays, that he muſt treat with indifference the intellect of a man who can aſcribe the preſent ſcarcity of corn to the war. Sir, I think there is nothing either abſurd or unjuſt in ſuch an opinion. Does not the war, neceſſarily, by its magazines, and ſtill more by its expeditions, increaſe conſumption? But when we learn that corn is, at this very moment, ſold in France for leſs than half the price which it bears here, is it not a fair thing to ſuppoſe, that, but for the war, and its prohibitions, a part of that grain would be brought to this country, on account of the high price which it would ſell for, and that, conſequently, our ſcarcity would be relieved from their abundance? I ſpeak only upon report, of courſe; but I ſee that the prices quoted in the French markets is leſs, by one half, than the prices in England. There was nothing, therefore, very abſurd in what fell from the noble perſon; and I would really adviſe the honourable gentleman, when he ſpeaks of perſons diſtinguiſhed for every virtue, to be a little more guarded in his language. I ſee no reaſon why he and his friends ſhould not leave, to perſons in another place, holding the ſame opinions as themſelves, the taſk of anſwering what may be thrown out there. Is not the phalanx ſufficient? It is no great compliment to their talents, conſidering their number, that they cannot be left to the taſk of anſwering the few to whom they are oppoſed; but, perhaps, the honourable gentleman has too little to do in this Houſe, and he is to be ſent there himſelf. In truth, I ſee no reaſon why even he might not be ſent, as well as ſome others who have been ſent there. I do not mean to ſpeak againſt them; but I really think that the honourable gentleman will find full employment for all his talents in anſwering the arguments which are

urged in this Houſe, without employing them in diſparaging one of the fineſt underſtandings in this kingdom.

And now, Sir, to return to the ſubject of the negotiation in 1797. It is, in my mind, extremely material to attend to the account which the right honourable gentleman gives of his memorable negotiation of 1797, and of his motives for entering into it. In all queſtions of peace and war, he ſays, many circumſtances muſt neceſſarily enter into the conſideration; and that they are not to be decided upon the extremes. The determination muſt be made upon a balance and compariſon of the evils or the advantages upon the one ſide and the other, and that one of the greateſt conſiderations is that of finance. Now, in 1797, the right honourable gentleman confeſſes he found himſelf peculiarly embarraſſed as to the reſources for the war, if they were to be found in the old and uſual way of the funding ſyſtem. Now, though he thought, upon his balance and compariſon of conſiderations, that the evils of war would be fewer than thoſe of peace, yet they would only be ſo, provided that he could eſtabliſh *a new and ſolid ſyſtem of finance* in the place of the old and exhauſted funding ſyſtem: and to accompliſh this, it was neceſſary to have the unanimous aſſent and approbation of the people. To procure this unanimity, he pretended to be a friend to negotiation, though he did not wiſh for the ſucceſs of that negotiation, but hoped, only, that through that means he ſhould bring the people to agree to his *new and ſolid ſyſtem of finance*. I truſt I ſtate the right honourable gentleman fairly. I am ſure that I mean to do ſo. With theſe views, then, what does he do? Knowing that, contrary to his declarations in this Houſe, the opinion of the people of England was generally for peace, he enters into a negotiation, in which, as the world believed at the time, and even until this day, he completely failed—No ſuch thing, Sir,—he completely ſucceeded—for his object was not to gain peace; it was to gain over the people of this country to a *new and a ſolid ſyſtem of finance*—that is, to the raiſing a great part of the ſupplies within the year, to the triple aſſeſſment, and to the tax upon income! And how did he gain them over? By pretending to be a friend of peace, which he was not; and by opening a ne-

gotiation, which he ſecretly wiſhed might not ſucceed! The right honourable gentleman ſays, that in all this he was honeſt and ſincere: he negotiated fairly, and would have obtained the peace, if the French had ſhewn a diſpoſition correſpondent to his own; but he rejoiced that their conduct was ſuch as to convince the people of England of the neceſſity of concurring with him in the views which he had, and in granting him the ſupply which he thought eſſential to their poſture at the time. Sir, I will not ſay, that in all this he was not honeſt to his own purpoſe, and that he has not been honeſt in his declarations and confeſſions this night; but I cannot agree that he was honeſt to this Houſe, or honeſt to the people of this country. To this Houſe it was not honeſt to make them counteract the ſenſe of the people, as he knew it to be expreſſed in the petitions upon the table;—nor was it honeſt to the country, to act in a diſguiſe, and to purſue a ſecret purpoſe unknown to them, while affecting to take the road which they pointed out. I know not whether this may not be honeſty in the political ethics of the right honourable gentleman, but I know that it would be called by a very different name in the common tranſactions of ſociety, and in the rules of morality, eſtabliſhed in private life. I know of nothing, in the hiſtory of this country, that it reſembles, except, perhaps, one of the moſt profligate periods—the reign of Charles II., when the ſale of Dunkirk might probably have been juſtified by the ſame pretence. He alſo declared war againſt France, and did it to cover a negotiation by which, in his difficulties, he was to gain a *ſolid ſyſtem of finance*.

But, Sir, I meet the right honourable gentleman on his own ground. I ſay that you ought to treat on the ſame principle on which you treated in 1797, in order to gain the cordial co-operation of the people. We want "experience, and the evidence of facts." Can there be any evidence of facts equal to that of a frank, open, and candid negotiation? Let us ſee whether Bonaparte will diſplay the ſame temper as his predeceſſors. If he ſhall do ſo, then you will confirm the people of England in their opinion of the neceſſity of continuing the war, and you will revive all the vigour which you rouſed in 1797. Or will you not do this until you have a reverſe of fortune? Will you never treat but when you are

in a ſituation of diſtreſs, and when you have occaſion to impoſe on the people?

But, you ſay, "you have not refuſed to treat." You have ſtated a caſe in which you will be ready immediately to enter into a negotiation, viz. the reſtoration of the Houſe of Bourbon; but you deny that this is a *ſine qua non;* and in your nonſenſical language, which I do not underſtand, you talk of *limited poſſibilities*, which may induce you to treat without the reſtoration of the Houſe of Bourbon. But do you ſtate what they are? Now, Sir, I ſay, that if you put one caſe, upon which you declare that you are willing to treat immediately, and ſay that there are other poſſible caſes which may induce you to treat hereafter, without mentioning what theſe poſſible caſes are, you do ſtate a *ſine qua non* of immediate treaty. Suppoſe that I have an eſtate to ſell, and I ſay my demand is 10001. for it—I will ſell the eſtate immediately for that ſum. To be ſure, there may be other terms upon which I may be willing to part with it; but I ſay nothing of them. The 10001. is the only condition that I ſtate now. Will any gentleman ſay, that I do not make the 10001. the *ſine qua non* of the immediate ſale? Thus, you ſay, the reſtoration of the Princes is not the only poſſible ground; but you give no other. This is your *projet.* Do you demand a *contre projet?* Do you follow your own rule? Do you not do the thing of which you complained in the enemy? You ſeemed to be afraid of receiving another propoſition; and by confining yourſelves to this one point, you make it, in fact, though not in terms, your *ſine qua non.*

But the right honourable gentleman, in his ſpeech, does what the official note avoids—He finds there the convenient words, "experience and the evidence of facts;"—upon theſe he goes into detail; and in order to convince the Houſe that new evidence is required, he goes back to all the earlieſt acts and crimes of the Revolution—to all the atrocities of all the governments that have paſſed away; and he contends that he muſt have experience that theſe foul crimes are repented of, and that a purer and a better ſyſtem is adopted in France, by which he may be ſure that they ſhall be capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity. Sir, theſe are not conciliatory words; nor is this a practicable ground to gain experience.

Does he think it poſſible, that evidence of a peaceable demeanour can be obtained in war?—What does he mean to ſay to the French Conſul? "Until you ſhall, in war, behave yourſelf in a peaceable manner, I will not treat with you."—Is there not ſomething extremely ridiculous in this? In duels, indeed, we have often heard of this kind of language. Two gentlemen go out, and fight: when, after diſcharging their piſtols at one another, it is not an unuſual thing for one of them to ſay to the other—"Now I am ſatisfied—I ſee that you are a man of honour, and we are friends again." There is ſomething, by the by, ridiculous even in this; but, between nations, it is more than ridiculous—it is criminal. It is a ground which no principle can juſtify, and which is as impracticable as it is impious. That two nations ſhould be ſet on to beat one another into friendſhip, is too abominable even for the fiction of romance; but for a Stateſman, ſeriouſly and gravely, to lay it down as a ſyſtem upon which he means to act, is monſtrous. What can we ſay of ſuch a teſt as he means to put the French Government to, but that it is hopeleſs? It is in the nature of war, to inflame animoſity—to exaſperate, not to ſoothe—to widen, not to approximate.—And ſo long as this is to be acted upon, I ſay, it is vain to hope that we can have the evidence which we require.

The right honourable gentleman, however, thinks otherwiſe; and he points out four diſtinct poſſible caſes, beſides the re-eſtabliſhment of the Bourbon Family, in which he would agree to treat with the French.

1. "If Bonaparte ſhall conduct himſelf ſo as to convince him that he has abandoned the principles which were objectionable in his predeceſſors, and that he ſhall be actuated by a more moderate ſyſtem." I aſk you, Sir, if this is likely to be aſcertained in war? It is the nature of war, not to allay, but to inflame the paſſions; and it is not by the invective and abuſe which have been thrown upon him and his government, nor by the continued irritations which war is ſure to give, that the virtues of moderation and forbearance are to be nouriſhed.

2. "If, contrary to the expectations of Miniſters, the people of France ſhall ſhew a diſpoſition to acquieſce in the

Government of Bonaparte." Does the right honourable gentleman mean to ſay, that becauſe it is an uſurpation on the part of the preſent Chief, that therefore the people are not likely to acquieſce in it? I have not time, Sir, to diſcuſs the queſtion of this uſurpation, or whether it is likely to be permanent; but I certainly have not ſo good an opinion of the French, or of any people, as to believe that it will be ſhort-lived, *merely* becauſe it was an uſurpation, and becauſe it is a ſyſtem of military deſpotiſm. Cromwell was an uſurper; and in many points there may be found a reſemblance between him and the preſent Chief Conſul of France. There is no doubt but that, on ſeveral occaſions of his life, Cromwell's ſincerity may be queſtioned, particularly in his ſelf-denying ordinance—in his affected piety, and other things; but would it not have been inſanity in France and Spain to refuſe to treat with him, becauſe he was an uſurper?—No, Sir, theſe are not the maxims by which governments are actuated. They do not inquire ſo much into the means by which power may have been acquired, as into the fact of where the power reſides. The people did acquieſce in the government of Cromwell: but it may be ſaid that the ſplendour of his talents, the vigour of his adminiſtration, the high tone with which he ſpoke to foreign nations, the ſucceſs of his arms, and the character which he gave to the Engliſh name, induced the nation to acquieſce in his uſurpation; and that we muſt not try Bonaparte by this example. Will it be ſaid that Bonaparte is not a man of great abilities? Will it be ſaid that he has not, by his victories, thrown a ſplendour over even the violence of the Revolution, and that he does not conciliate the French people by the high and lofty tone in which he ſpeaks to foreign nations? Are not the French, then, as likely, as the Engliſh in the caſe of Cromwell, to acquieſce in his government? If they ſhould do ſo, the right honourable gentleman may find that this poſſible predicament may fail him. He may find, that though one power may make war, it requires two to make peace. He may find that Bonaparte was as inſincere as himſelf, in the propoſition which he made; and in his turn he may come forward and ſay—"I have no occaſion now for concealment. It is true, that in the beginning of the year 1800, I offered to treat, not

becauſe I wiſhed for peace, but becauſe the people of France wiſhed for it; and beſides, my old reſources being exhauſted, and there being no means of carrying on the war without a new and ſolid ſyſtem of finance, I pretended to treat, becauſe I wiſhed to procure the unanimous aſſent of the French people to this *new and ſolid ſyſtem of finance*. Did you think I was in earneſt? You were deceived. I now throw off the maſk: I have gained my point; and I reject your offers with ſcorn." Is it not a very poſſible caſe that he may uſe this language? Is it not within the right honourable gentleman's *knowledge of human nature?* But even if this ſhould not be the caſe, will not the very teſt which you require—the acquieſcence of the people of France in his Government—give him an advantage-ground in the negotiation which he does not poſſeſs now? Is it quite ſure, that when he finds himſelf ſafe in his ſeat, he will treat on the ſame terms as now, and that you will get a better peace ſome time hence, than you might reaſonably hope to obtain at this moment? Will he not have one intereſt leſs than at preſent? and do you not overlook a favourable occaſion, for a chance which is extremely doubtful? Theſe are the conſiderations which I would urge to His Majeſty's Miniſters, againſt the dangerous experiment of waiting for the acquieſcence of the people of France.

3. "If the allies of this country ſhall be leſs ſucceſsful than they have every reaſon to expect they will be, in ſtirring up the people of France againſt Bonaparte, and in the farther proſecution of the war." And,

4. "If the preſſure of the war ſhould be heavier upon us, than it would be convenient for us to continue to bear."—Theſe are the other two poſſible emergencies in which the right honourable gentleman would treat even with Bonaparte. Sir, I have often blamed the right honourable gentleman for being diſingenuous and inſincere. On the preſent occaſion I certainly cannot charge him with any ſuch thing. He has made to-night a moſt honeſt confeſſion; he is open and candid. He tells Bonaparte fairly what he has to expect. "I mean," ſays he, "to do every thing in my power to raiſe up the people of France againſt you—I have engaged a number of allies, and our combined efforts ſhall be uſed to excite inſurrection and civil war in France—I will ſtrive to murder you, or to

get you ſent away. If I ſucceed, well; but if I fail, then I will treat with you. My reſources being exhauſted; even my ſolid ſyſtem of finance having failed to ſupply me with the means of keeping together my allies, and of feeding the diſcontents I have excited in France—then you may expect to ſee me renounce my high tone—my attachment to the Houſe of Bourbon—my abhorrence of your crimes—my alarm at your principles; for then I ſhall be ready to own, that, on the balance and compariſon of circumſtances, there will be leſs danger in concluding a peace, than in the continuance of war!" Is this a political language for one ſtate to hold to another? And what ſort of peace does the right honourable gentleman expect to receive in that caſe? Does he think that Bonaparte would grant, to baffled inſolence—to humiliated pride—to diſappointment and to imbecility, the ſame terms which he would be ready to give now? The right honourable gentleman cannot have forgot what he ſaid on another occaſion,

" ——————Potuit quæ plurima virtus
" Eſſe fuit, toto certatum eſt corpore regni."

He would then have to repeat his words, but with a different application—He would have to ſay, that all our efforts are vain—we have exhauſted our ſtrength—our deſigns are impracticable—and we muſt ſue to you for peace.

Sir, what is the queſtion to-night? We are called upon to ſupport Miniſters in refuſing a frank, candid and reſpectful offer of negotiation, and to countenance them in continuing the war. Now, I would put the queſtion in another way. Suppoſe that Miniſters had been inclined to adopt the line of conduct which they purſued in 1796 and 1797, and that to-night, inſtead of a queſtion on a war addreſs, it had been an addreſs to His Majeſty, to thank him for accepting the overture, and for opening a negotiation to treat for peace: I aſk the gentlemen oppoſite—I appeal to the whole 558 repreſentatives of the people—to lay their hands upon their hearts, and to ſay, whether they would not have cordially voted for ſuch an addreſs? Would they, or would they not? Yes, Sir, if the addreſs had breathed a ſpirit of peace, your benches would have reſounded with rejoicings, and with praiſes of a meaſure

that was likely to bring back the bleſſings of tranquillity. On the preſent occaſion, then, I aſk for the vote of no gentlemen but of thoſe who, in the ſecret confeſſion of their conſcience, admit, at this inſtant, while they hear me, that they would have cheerfully and heartily voted with the Miniſter for an addreſs directly the reverſe of this. If any ſuch gentleman ſhould vote with me, I ſhould be this night in the greateſt majority that ever I had the honour to vote with in this Houſe. I do not know that the right honourable gentleman would find, even on the benches around him, a ſingle individual who would not vote with me—I am ſure he would not find many—I do not know that in this Houſe I could ſingle out the individual, who would think himſelf bound by conſiſtency to vote againſt the right honourable gentleman, on an addreſs for negotiation. There may be ſome, but they are very few. I do know, indeed, one moſt honourable man in another place (whoſe purity and integrity I reſpect, though I lament the opinion he has formed on this ſubject), who would think himſelf bound, from the uniform conſiſtency of his life, to vote againſt an addreſs for negotiation. Earl Fitzwilliam would, I verily believe, do ſo. He would feel himſelf bound, from the previous votes he has given, to declare his objection to all treaty: but I own I do not know more in either Houſe of Parliament—there may be others, but I do not know them. Why then, what is the Houſe of Commons come to, when, notwithſtanding their ſupport given to the right honourable gentleman in 1796 and 1797, on his entering into negotiation; notwithſtanding their inward conviction, that they would vote with him now for the ſame meaſure—what are we to think of the character of that Houſe of Commons, who, after ſupporting the Miniſter in his negotiation for a ſolid ſyſtem of finance, can now bring themſelves to countenance his abandonment of the ground he took, and to ſupport him in refuſing all negotiation! What will be ſaid of gentlemen who ſhall vote in this way, and yet feel, in their conſciences, that they would have, with infinitely more readineſs, voted the other?

Sir, we have heard to-night a great many moſt acrimonious invectives againſt Bonaparte, againſt all the courſe of his conduct, and againſt the unprincipled manner in which

he ſeized upon the reins of government. I will not make his defence—I think all this ſort of invective, which is uſed only to inflame the paſſions of this Houſe and of the country, exceedingly ill-timed, and very impolitic—but I ſay I will not make his defence. I am not ſufficiently in poſſeſſion of materials upon which to form an opinion on the character and conduct of this extraordinary man. On his arrival in France, he found the Government in a very unſettled ſtate, and the whole affairs of the Republic deranged, crippled, and involved. He thought it neceſſary to reform the Government; and he did reform it, juſt in the way in which a military man may be expected to carry on a reform—he ſeized on the whole authority to himſelf. It will not be expected from me, that I ſhould either approve or apologize for ſuch an act. I am certainly not for reforming governments by ſuch expedients; but how this Houſe can be ſo violently indignant at the idea of military deſpotiſm, is, I own, a little ſingular, when I ſee the compoſure with which they can obſerve it nearer home; nay, when I ſee them regard it as a frame of government moſt peculiarly ſuited to the exerciſe of free opinion, on a ſubject the moſt important of any that can engage the attention of a people. Is it not the ſyſtem which was ſo happily and ſo advantageouſly eſtabliſhed of late, all over Ireland; and which, even now, the Government may, at its pleaſure, proclaim over the whole of that kingdom? Are not the perſons and property of the people left, in many diſtricts, at this moment, to the entire will of military commanders? and is not this held out as peculiarly proper and advantageous, at a time when the people of Ireland are freely, and with unbiaſſed judgments, to diſcuſs the moſt intereſting queſtion of a Legiſlative Union? Notwithſtanding the exiſtence of martial law, ſo far do we think Ireland from being enſlaved, that we think it preciſely the period and the circumſtances under which ſhe may beſt declare her free opinion! Now, really, Sir, I cannot think that gentlemen, who talk in this way about Ireland, can, with a good grace, rail at military deſpotiſm in France.

But, it ſeems, "Bonaparte has broken his oaths. He has violated his oath of fidelity to the Conſtitution of the year 3." Sir, I am not one of thoſe who think that any ſuch oaths

ought ever to be exacted. They are ſeldom or ever of any effect; and I am not for ſporting with a thing ſo ſacred as an oath. I think it would be good to lay aſide all ſuch oaths. Who ever heard, that, in revolutions, the oath of fidelity to the former Government was ever regarded; or, even when violated, that it was imputed to the perſons as a crime? In times of revolution, men who take up arms are called rebels—If they fail, they are adjudged to be traitors. But who, before, ever heard of their being perjured? On the reſtoration of King Charles II., thoſe who had taken up arms for the Commonwealth, were ſtigmatized as rebels and traitors, but not as men foreſworn. Was the Earl of Devonſhire charged with being perjured, on account of the allegiance he had ſworn to the Houſe of Stuart, and the part he took in thoſe ſtruggles which preceded and brought about the Revolution? The violation of oaths of allegiance was never imputed to the people of England, and will never be imputed to any people. But who brings up the queſtion of oaths? He who ſtrives to make twenty-four millions of perſons violate the oaths they have taken to their preſent Conſtitution, and who deſires to re-eſtabliſh the Houſe of Bourbon by ſuch violation of their vows. I put it ſo, Sir; becauſe, if the queſtion of oaths be of the leaſt conſequence, it is equal on both ſides. He who deſires the whole people of France to perjure themſelves, and who hopes for ſucceſs in his project only upon their doing ſo, ſurely cannot make it a charge againſt Bonaparte that he has done the ſame.

" Ah! but Bonaparte has declared it as his opinion, that " the two Governments of Great Britain and of France can- " not exiſt together. After the treaty of Campo Formio, he " ſent too confidential perſons, Berthier and Monge, to the " Directory, to ſay ſo in his name." Well, and what is there in this abſurd and puerile aſſertion, if it was ever made? Has not the right honourable gentleman, in this Houſe, ſaid the ſame thing? In this, at leaſt, they reſemble one another. They have both made uſe of this aſſertion; and I believe, that theſe two illuſtrious perſons are the only two on earth who think it. But let us turn the tables. We ought to put ourſelves at times in the place of the enemy, if we are deſirous of really examining with candour and fairneſs the diſpute be-

tween us. How may they not interpret the ſpeeches of Miniſters, and their friends, in both Houſes of the Britiſh Parliament? If we are to be told of the idle ſpeech of Berthier and Monge, may they not alſo bring up ſpeeches, in which it has not been merely hinted, but broadly aſſerted, that "the two "Conſtitutions of England and France could not exiſt toge-"ther?" May not theſe offences and charges be reciprocated without end? Are we ever to go on in this miſerable ſquabble about words? Are we ſtill, as we happen to be ſucceſsful on the one ſide or other, to bring up theſe impotent accuſations, inſults, and provocations, againſt each other; and only when we are beaten and unfortunate, to think of treating? Oh! pity the condition of man, gracious God! and ſave us from ſuch a ſyſtem of malevolence, in which all our old and venerated prejudices are to be done away, and by which we are to be taught to conſider war as the natural ſtate of man, and peace but as a dangerous and difficult extremity!

Sir, this temper muſt be corrected. It is a diabolical ſpirit, and would lead to an interminable war. Our hiſtory is full of inſtances, that where we have overlooked a proffered occaſion to treat, we have uniformly ſuffered by delay. At what time did we ever profit by obſtinately perſevering in war? We refuſed at ~~Ryſwick~~ Gertruydenberg propoſitions which ſome years afterwards we were very well pleaſed to accept of at ~~Gertruydenberg.~~ Utrecht And as to the queſtion of ſecurity, from the future machinations or ambition of the French, I aſk you, what ſecurity you ever had, or could have? Did the different treaties made with Louis XIV. ſerve to tie up his hands—to reſtrain his ambition, or to ſtifle his reſtleſs ſpirit? At what time, in old or in recent periods, could you ſafely repoſe on the honour, forbearance and moderation of the French Government? Was there ever an idea of refuſing to treat, becauſe the peace might be afterwards inſecure? The peace of 1763 was not accompanied with ſecurities; and it was no ſooner made, than the French Court began, as uſual, its intrigues. And what ſecurity did the right honourable gentleman exact at the peace of 1783, in which he was engaged? Were we rendered ſecure by that peace? The right honourable gentleman knows well, that ſoon after that peace, the

French formed a plan, in conjunction with the Dutch, of attacking our India poſſeſſions, of raiſing up the native powers againſt us, and of driving us out of India; as the French were deſirous of doing now—only with this difference, that the Cabinet of France entered into this project in a moment of profound peace, and when they conceived us to be lulled into a perfect ſecurity. After making the peace of 1783, the right honourable gentleman and his friends went out, and I, among others, came into office. Suppoſe, Sir, that we had taken up the jealouſy upon which the right honourable gentleman now acts, and had refuſed to ratify the peace which he had made—Suppoſe that we had ſaid—No; France is acting a perfidious part—we ſee no ſecurity for England in this treaty—they want only a reſpite, in order to attack us again in an important part of our dominions; and we ought not to confirm the treaty. I aſk you—would the right honourable gentleman have ſupported us in this refuſal? I ſay, that upon his preſent reaſoning he ought; but I put it fairly to him, would he have ſupported us in refuſing to ratify the treaty upon ſuch a pretence? He certainly ought not, and I am ſure he would not; but the courſe of reaſoning which he now aſſumes, would have juſtified his taking ſuch a ground. On the contrary, I am perſuaded that he would have ſaid—"This is a refinement upon jealouſy.—Security! You have ſecurity, the only ſecurity that you can ever expect to get. It is the preſent intereſt of France to make peace. She will keep it if it be her intereſt—She will break it if it be her intereſt. Such is the ſtate of nations; and you have nothing but your own vigilance for your ſecurity."

"It is not the intereſt of Bonaparte, it ſeems, ſincerely to "enter into a negotiation, or, if he ſhould even make peace, "ſincerely to keep it." But how are we to decide upon his ſincerity? By refuſing to treat with him? Surely, if we mean to diſcover his ſincerity, we ought to hear the propoſitions which he deſires to make. "But peace would be unfriendly to his "ſyſtem of military deſpotiſm." Sir, I hear a great deal about the ſhort-lived nature of military deſpotiſm. I wiſh the hiſtory of the world would bear gentlemen out in this deſcription of military deſpotiſm. Was not the Government erected by Auguſtus Cæſar a military deſpotiſm? And yet

it endured for 600 or 700 years. Military deſpotiſm, unfortunately, is too likely in its nature to be permanent, and it is not true that it depends on the life of the firſt uſurper. Though half of the Roman Emperors were murdered, yet the military deſpotiſm went on; and ſo it would be, I fear, in France. If Bonaparte ſhould diſappear from the ſcene, to make room, perhaps, for a Berthier, or any other General, what difference would that make in the quality of French deſpotiſm, or in our relation to the country? We may as ſafely treat with a Bonaparte, or with any of his ſucceſſors, be they whom they may, as we could with a Louis XVI. a Louis XVII. or a Louis XVIII.—There is no difference but in the name. Where the power eſſentially reſides, thither we ought to go for peace.

But, Sir, if we are to reaſon on the fact, I ſhould think that it is the intereſt of Bonaparte to make peace. A lover of military glory, as that General muſt neceſſarily be, may he not think that his meaſure of glory is full—that it may be tarniſhed by a reverſe of fortune, and can hardly be increaſed by any new laurels? He muſt feel, that, in the ſituation to which he is now raiſed, he can no longer depend on his own fortune, his own genius, and his own talents, for a continuance of his ſucceſs; he muſt be under the neceſſity of employing other Generals, whoſe miſconduct or incapacity might endanger his power, or whoſe triumphs even might affect the intereſt which he holds in the opinion of the French. Peace, then, would ſecure to him what he has achieved, and fix the inconſtancy of fortune. But this will not be his only motive. He muſt ſee that France alſo requires a reſpite—a breathing interval, to recruit her waſted ſtrength. To procure her this reſpite, would be, perhaps, the attainment of more ſolid glory, as well as the means of acquiring more ſolid power, than any thing which he can hope to gain from arms, and from the proudeſt triumphs. May he not then be zealous to gain this fame, the only ſpecies of fame, perhaps, that is worth acquiring? Nay, granting that his ſoul may ſtill burn with the thirſt of military exploits, is it not likely that he is diſpoſed to yield to the feelings of the French people, and to conſolidate his power by conſulting their intereſts? I have a right to argue in this way, when ſuppoſitions of his inſincerity

are reaſoned upon on the other ſide. Sir, theſe aſperſions are in truth always idle, and even miſchievous. I have been too long accuſtomed to hear imputations and calumnies thrown out upon great and honourable characters, to be much influenced by them. My honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erſkine) has paid this night a moſt juſt, deſerved and honourable tribute of applauſe, to the memory of that great and unparalleled character, who is ſo recently loſt to the world. I muſt, like him, beg leave to dwell a moment on the venerable George Waſhington, though I know that it is impoſſible for me to beſtow any thing like adequate praiſe on a character which gave us, more than any other human being, the example of a perfect man; yet, good, great and unexampled as General Waſhington was, I can remember the time when he was not better ſpoken of in this Houſe than Bonaparte is now. The right honourable gentleman who opened this debate (Mr. Dundas) may remember in what terms of diſdain, of virulence, even of contempt, General Waſhington was ſpoken of by gentlemen on that ſide of the Houſe. Does he not recollect with what marks of indignation any Member was ſtigmatized as an enemy to his country, who mentioned with common reſpect the name of General Waſhington? If a negotiation had then been propoſed to be opened with that great man, what would have been ſaid? Would you treat with a Rebel, a Traitor! What an example would you not give by ſuch an act! I do not know whether the right honourable gentleman may not yet poſſeſs ſome of his old prejudices on the ſubject. I hope not: I hope by this time we are all convinced that a Republican Government, like that of America, may exiſt without danger or injury to ſocial order, or to eſtabliſhed Monarchies. They have happily ſhewn that they can maintain the relations of peace and amity with other States: they have ſhewn, too, that they are alive to the feelings of honour; but they do not loſe ſight of plain good ſenſe and diſcretion. They have not refuſed to negotiate with the French, and they have accordingly the hopes of a ſpeedy termination of every difference. We cry up their conduct, but we do not imitate it. At the beginning of the ſtruggle, we were told that the French were ſetting up a ſet of wild and impracticable theories, and that we ought not to be miſled by

them—we could not grapple with theories. Now we are told that we muſt not treat, becauſe, out of the Lottery, Bonaparte has drawn ſuch a prize as military deſpotiſm. Is military deſpotiſm a theory? One would think that that is one of the practical things which Miniſters might underſtand, and to which they would have no particular objection. But what is our preſent conduct founded on but a theory, and that a moſt wild and ridiculous theory? What are we fighting for? Not for a principle; not for ſecurity; not for conqueſt even; but merely for an experiment and a ſpeculation, to diſcover whether a gentleman at Paris may not turn out a better man than we now take him to be.

My honourable friend (Mr. Whitbread) has been cenſured for an opinion which he gave, and I think juſtly, that the change of property in France ſince the Revolution muſt form an almoſt inſurmountable barrier to the return of the antient proprietors. "No ſuch thing," ſays the right honourable gentleman; "nothing can be more eaſy. Property is depre-"ciated to ſuch a rate, that the purchaſers would eaſily be "brought to reſtore the eſtates." I very much differ with him in this idea. It is the character of every ſuch convulſion as that which has ravaged France, that an infinite and undeſcribable load of miſery is inflicted upon private families. The heart ſickens at the recital of the ſorrows which it engenders.—No revolution implied, though it may have occaſioned, a total change of property—The reſtoration of the Bourbons does imply it; and there is the difference. There is no doubt but that if the noble families had foreſeen the duration and the extent of the evils which were to fall upon their heads, they would have taken a very different line of conduct. But they unfortunately flew from their country. The King and his adviſers ſought foreign aid. A confederacy was formed to reſtore them by military force; and as a means of reſiſting this combination, the eſtates of the fugitives were confiſcated and ſold. However compaſſion may deplore the caſe, it cannot be ſaid that the thing is unprecedented. The people have always reſorted to ſuch means of defence. Now the queſtion is, how this property is to be got out of their hands? If it be true, as I have heard it ſaid, the purchaſers of national and forfeited eſtates amount to

1,500,000 perſons—I ſay, if this be ſo, I ſee no hopes of their being forced to deliver up their property; nor do I even know that they ought. I do not know whether it would be the means of reſtoring tranquillity and order to a country, to attempt to diveſt a body of one million and a half of inhabitants, in order to reinſtate a much ſmaller body. I queſtion the policy, even if the thing were practicable; but I aſſert, that ſuch a body of new proprietors forms an inſurmountable barrier to the reſtoration of the antient order of things. Never was a revolution conſolidated by a pledge ſo ſtrong.

But, as if this were not of itſelf ſufficient, Louis XVIII. from his retirement at Mittau, puts forth a manifeſto, in which he aſſures the friends of his houſe, that he is about to come back with all the powers that formerly belonged to his family. He does not promiſe to the people a Conſtitution which might tend to conciliate their hearts; but, ſtating, that he is to come with all the *ancien regime*, they would naturally attach to it its proper appendages of Baſtiles, Lettres de Cachet, Gabelle, &c. And the Nobleſſe, for whom this proclamation was peculiarly conceived, would alſo naturally feel, that if the Monarch was to be reſtored to all his privileges, they ſurely were to be reinſtated in their eſtates without a compenſation to the purchaſers. Is this likely to make the people wiſh for the reſtoration of royalty? I have no doubt but there may be a number of Chouans in France, though I am perſuaded that little dependence is to be placed on their efforts. There may be a number of people diſperſed over France, and particularly in certain provinces, who may retain a degree of attachment to royalty: and how the Government will contrive to compromiſe with that ſpirit, I know not. I ſuſpect, however, that Bonaparte will try: his efforts have been turned to that object; and, if we may believe report, he has ſucceeded to a conſiderable degree. He will naturally call to his recollection the precedent which the hiſtory of France itſelf will furniſh. The once formidable inſurrection of the Hugonots was completely ſtifled, and the party conciliated, by the policy of Henry IV. who gave them ſuch privileges, and raiſed them ſo high in the Go ernment, as to make ſome perſons apprehend danger therefrom to the unity of the empire. Nor will the French be likely to forget

the revocation of the edict—one of the memorable acts of the Houſe of Bourbon—an act which was never ſurpaſſed in atrocity, injuſtice, and impolicy, by any thing that has diſgraced Jacobiniſm. If Bonaparte ſhall attempt ſome ſimilar arrangement to that of Henry IV. with the Chouans, who will ſay that he is likely to fail? He will meet with no great obſtacle to ſucceſs from the influence which our Miniſters have eſtabliſhed with the Chiefs, or in the attachment and dependence which they have on our protection; for what has the right honourable gentleman told him, in ſtating the contingencies in which he will treat with Bonaparte? He will excite a rebellion in France—He will give ſupport to the Chouans, if they can ſtand their ground; but he will not make common cauſe with them: for unleſs, they can depoſe Bonaparte, ſend him into baniſhment, or execute him, he will abandon the Chouans, and treat with this very man, whom, at the ſame time, he deſcribes as holding the reins and weilding the powers of France for purpoſes of unexampled barbarity.

Sir, I wiſh the atrocities of which we hear ſo much, and which I abhor as much as any man, were, indeed, unexampled. I fear that they do not belong excluſively to the French. When the right honourable gentleman ſpeaks of the extraordinary ſucceſſes of the laſt campaign, he does not mention the horrors by which ſome of theſe ſucceſſes were accompanied. Naples, for inſtance, has been, among others, what is called *delivered*; and yet, if I am rightly informed, it has been ſtained and polluted by murders ſo ferocious, and by cruelties of every kind ſo abhorrent, that the heart ſhudders at the recital. It has been ſaid, not only that the miſerable victims of the rage and brutality of the fanatics were ſavagely murdered, but that, in many inſtances, their fleſh was eaten and devoured by the Cannibals, who are the advocates and the inſtruments of ſocial order! Nay, England is not totally exempt from reproach, if the rumours which are circulated be true. I will mention a fact, to give Miniſters the opportunity, if it be falſe, to wipe away the ſtain that it muſt otherwiſe affix on the Britiſh name. It is ſaid, that a party of the Republican inhabitants of Naples took ſhelter in the fortreſs of the Caſtel de Uova. They were beſieged by a detachment

from the royal army, to whom they refuſed to ſurrender; but demanded that a Britiſh officer ſhould be brought forward, and to him they capitulated. They made terms with him under the ſanction of the Britiſh name. It was agreed, that their perſons and property ſhould be ſafe, and that they ſhould be conveyed to Toulon. They were accordingly put on board a veſſel; but before they ſailed, their property was confiſcated, numbers of them taken out, thrown into dungeons, and ſome of them, I underſtand, notwithſtanding the Britiſh guarantee, actually executed!

Where then, Sir, is this war, which on every ſide is pregnant with ſuch horrors, to be carried? Where is it to ſtop? Not till you eſtabliſh the Houſe of Bourbon! And this you cheriſh the hope of doing, becauſe you have had a ſucceſsful campaign. Why, Sir, before this you have had a ſucceſsful campaign. The ſituation of the allies, with all they have gained, is ſurely not to be compared now to what it was when you had taken Valenciennes, Queſnoy, Condé, &c. which induced ſome gentlemen in this Houſe to prepare themſelves for a march to Paris. With all that you have gained, you ſurely will not ſay that the proſpect is brighter now than it was then. What have you gained but the recovery of a part of what you before loſt? One campaign is ſucceſsful to you—another to them; and in this way, animated by the vindictive paſſions of revenge, hatred, and rancour, which are infinitely more flagitious, even, than thoſe of ambition and the thirſt of power, you may go on for ever; as, with ſuch black incentives, I ſee no end to human miſery.

And all this without an intelligible motive—all this becauſe you may gain a better peace a year or two hence! So that we are called upon to go on merely as a ſpeculation—We muſt keep Bonaparte for ſome time longer at war, as a ſtate of probation. Gracious God, Sir! is war a ſtate of probation? Is peace a raſh ſyſtem? Is it dangerous for nations to live in amity with each other? Is your vigilance, your policy, your common powers of obſervation, to be extinguiſhed by putting an end to the horrors of war? Cannot this ſtate of probation be as well undergone without adding to the catalogue of human ſufferings? "But we muſt *pauſe!*" What! muſt the bowels of Great Britain be torn out—her beſt blood

be ſpilt—her treaſure waſted—that you may make an experiment? Put yourſelves, oh! that you would put yourſelves in the field of battle, and learn to judge of the ſort of horrors that you excite. In former wars a man might, at leaſt, have ſome feeling, ſome intereſt, that ſerved to balance in his mind the impreſſions which a ſcene of carnage and of death muſt inflict. If a man had been preſent at the battle of Blenheim, for inſtance, and had inquired the motive of the battle, there was not a ſoldier engaged who could not have ſatisfied his curioſity, and even, perhaps, allayed his feelings—they were fighting to repreſs the uncontrouled ambition of the Grand Monarque—But if a man were preſent now at a field of ſlaughter, and were to inquire for what they were fighting—"Fighting!" would be the anſwer; "they are not fighting, they are *pauſing*." "Why is that man expiring? Why is that other writhing with agony? What means this implacable fury?" The anſwer muſt be, "You are quite wrong—Sir, you deceive yourſelf—They are not fighting—Do not diſturb them—they are merely *pauſing*!—this man is not expiring with agony—that man is not dead—he is only pauſing! Lord help you, Sir! they are not angry with one another; they have now no cauſe of quarrel—but their country thinks that there ſhould be a pauſe. All that you ſee, Sir, is nothing like fighting—there is no harm, nor cruelty, nor bloodſhed in it whatever—it is nothing more than *a political pauſe!*—it is merely to try an experiment—to ſee whether Bonaparte will not behave himſelf better than heretofore; and in the mean time we have agreed to a pauſe, in pure friendſhip!" And is this the way, Sir, that you are to ſhew yourſelves the advocates of order? You take up a ſyſtem calculated to uncivilize the world—to deſtroy order—to trample on religion—to ſtifle in the heart, not merely the generoſity of noble ſentiment, but the affections of ſocial nature; and in the proſecution of this ſyſtem, you ſpread terror and devaſtation all around you.

Sir, I have done. I have told you my opinion. I think you ought to have given a civil, clear and explicit anſwer to the overture which was fairly and handſomely made you. If you were deſirous that the negotiation ſhould have included all your allies, as the means of bringing about a general peace,

you ſhould have told Bonaparte ſo; but I believe you were afraid of his agreeing to the propoſal. You took that method before. Aye, but you ſay the people were anxious for peace in 1797. I ſay they are friends to peace now; and I am confident that you will one day own it.—Believe me, they are friends to peace; although, by the laws which you have made, reſtraining the expreſſion of the ſenſe of the people, public opinion cannot now be heard as loudly and unequivocally as heretofore.—But I will not go into the internal ſtate of this country. It is too afflicting to the heart to ſee the ſtrides which have been made by means of, and under the miſerable pretext of this war, againſt liberty of every kind, both of power of ſpeech and of writing; and to obſerve in another kingdom the rapid approaches to that military deſpotiſm which we affect to make an argument againſt peace. I know, Sir, that public opinion, if it could be collected, would be for peace, as much now as in 1797: and I know that it is only by public opinion—not by a ſenſe of their duty—not by the inclination of their minds, that Miniſters will be brought, if ever, to give us peace,

I conclude, Sir, with repeating what I ſaid before: I aſk for no gentleman's vote who would have reprobated the compliance of Miniſters with the propoſition of the French Government; I aſk for no gentleman's ſupport to-night who would have voted againſt Miniſters, if they had come down and propoſed to enter into a negotiation with the French: But I have a right to aſk—I know, that in honour, in conſiſtency, in conſcience, I have a right to expect, the vote of every honourable gentleman who would have voted with Miniſters in an Addreſs to His Majeſty, diametrically oppoſite to the motion of this night.

No anſwer was made to this ſpeech.

The Houſe divided,

Ayes, for the Addreſs againſt Negotiation, 260
Noes, - - - - - - - - - - - 64

FINIS.

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